

HIS HABIT TO SLAY

Joe Fowler Would Rather Kill a Man Than Eat.

Career and Death by the Rope of the Hands of the Once Famous Belle Fowler, New Mexico's Most Notorious desperado.

"He was standing by the hotel bar chawin' his pistols at five o'clock in the morning."

This testimony was given in court by a witness concerning the doings and mental condition of Joe Fowler, who, in 1888, was being tried for his life at the general term in Socorro, N. M. On being asked by his counsel what he meant by the expression "chawin' his pistols," he explained that Joe, after an all night's drinking bout, to show his steadiness and nerve had put the muzzles of his two loaded revolvers into his mouth and was pulling the hammers part way back and letting them snap down upon the cartridges.

Joe Fowler, who figured as a dangerous man for years in New Mexico, was at one time the keeper of a dance hall in Santa Fe. From there he went to Socorro county, bought or took up a stock range, and was a ranchman for several years, at which business he prospered. He was a short, thick-set man, with whom homicide had become a habit, and his bearing and expression were a warning that he was a man to be let alone if possible. He had made his reputation as a "bad man" before going to Socorro county, and he added to it by several shooting exploits while living at his ranch. The most murderous and characteristic one, perhaps, was his killing of three men between Socorro and his ranch. The men were camping together on the prairie at night, and he killed them in their sleep. There were no witnesses, and Fowler's account of the affair was that in riding to his ranch alone he overtook them on the prairie, and that they, not recognizing him, confided to him their intention of going to his ranch, killing the proprietor, and getting away with as much booty as they could find. Whatever may have been the general opinion as to the truth of his story, the men being dead there was no means of disproving it, and Joe went free.

He was the husband of the notorious Belle Fowler, the petite, black-eyed



"CHAWIN' HIS PISTOLA."

children, once of the variety stage, who figured so sensationally in the New Mexico cities in the eighties. He had married her in Santa Fe, and she lived with him during his stay at the ranch. Their matrimonial life was not wholly rose strewn, for she carried upon her cheek as a memento of one episode of it a deep though not disfiguring scar, which was currently credited to her husband's knocking her down with a blow from a carbine. After his death she came in for a share of his property, which was considerable, and while it lasted she was famous among the gambling saloons of Santa Fe, Las Vegas and other New Mexico towns as a player for high stakes, and sometimes as a dealer at faro.

It was on the same night, in immediate sequence to the "chawin'" of his pistols, that Joe got into the trouble that cut short his life. He had sold his ranch and stock, and with a large sum of money had come into Socorro to enjoy himself. After his all night's drinking he was getting into a dangerous mood, and now that he was snapping pistols at his head two officers of the law thought it time to interfere for his own and the public safety. They came behind him, each seized him by an arm, and wrestling his pistols from him, they took him out of the house and were walking him up the street toward the lockup. A citizen of Socorro, a friend of Joe, seeing him in custody, came up to the party to intercede for the prisoner. Joe waited until he got near enough, and then, without provocation, drew a bowie knife and stabbed the friend to the heart, killing him instantly.

He was brought to trial, convicted, sentenced to be hanged, and placed in the Socorro jail to await the day of execution. From the desperate character of the man and the money that he had at his disposal, there was special danger in his case of escape or rescue. This the citizens of Socorro were determined should not happen, and they took effective measures that the murderer of their fellow citizen should be avenged. A steel cage was ordered from the east, in which more securely to confine the prisoner, and every night a detachment of vigilantes guarded the jail, patrolling its four walls on the outside.

Before the appointed time for the execution of the death sentence arrived the governor of the territory granted the prisoner a reprieve. The citizens of Socorro treated the respite as waste paper, continued to mount guard over the jail, and punctually on the day and hour set by the court for the execution they took Joe Fowler from his cell and hanged him.

Unsettled Dons. Out of 17,000,000 inhabitants of Spain over 11,000,000 are ignorant of the art of reading or writing.

Editing in China. The following is said to be an exact translation of the letter sent by a Chinese editor to a would-be contributor, whose manuscript he found it necessary to return: "Illustrations Brother of the Sun and Moon, behold thy servant prostrate before thy feet. I know too thee and beg that of thy graciousness thou mayst grant that I may speak and live. Thy honored manuscript has been delivered to cast the light of its august countenance upon us. With radiant

we have perused it. By the bones of my ancestors never have I encountered such wit, such pathos, such lofty thought. With fear and trembling I return the writing. Were I to publish the treasure you sent me the emperor would order that it should be made the standard, and that none be published except such as equal it. Knowing literature as I do, and that it would be impossible in ten thousand years to equal what you have done, I send your writing back. Ten thousand times I crave your pardon. Behold, my head is at your feet. Do what you will. Your servant's servant. TUE EDITOR."

An Abstract Question. The two men had just told the hostess that they had had a delightful evening, and were going out into the rainy night.

"You remember the old query as to where all the pins go," said one of them, as he made a reach toward the hall rack.

"Yes."

"Well, there's a problem that has been bothering me more than that."

"What's the problem?"

"Who is it that buys all the umbrellas?"

And his companion also made a reach and gave the conundrum up.—Washington Star.

At the Cafe.

Mrs. Swellbones—They say that if you drink absinthe it makes your hand tremble dreadfully.

Mrs. Flasher—Really? Walter, make that a large absinthe instead of a ginger ale. I am going to wear nine diamond rings at the opera to-night.—N. Y. World.

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